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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the problems of youth at risk of not successfully making the transition to adulthood. It examines the concept of mentoring and discusses several existing and successful mentoring programs. It looks at mentoring as it relates to young people--teenagers, young adults, and also some "pre-teens." Chapter 1 presents an overview of mentoring--its appeal, the characteristics of a mentoring relationship, its benefits, its social context, and its long-term goals. Chapter 2 examines where mentoring is occurring for young people, with a focus on programs affiliated with college campuses, within-school mentoring, and state-initiated mentoring. Private or nonprofit support for mentoring is also discussed. Chapter 3 reviews the policy context of mentoring, with suggestions for policy makers who may be considering mentoring as part of their agendas. (TE)

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Mentoring Young People Makes a Difference

YOUTH AT RISK

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MENTORING YOUNG PEOPLE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

by

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January 1990

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FOREWORD

This paper is the tenth of an Education Commission of the States (ECS) series focusing on the problems of youth at risk of not successfully making the transition to adulthood — the dropout, the underachiever and far too many other young people who end up disconnected from school and society. This paper examines the concept of mentoring and discusses several existing and successful mentoring programs.

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Frank Newman
President

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INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at mentoring as it relates to young people — teenagers, young adults and also some "pre-teens." Certainly, a middle-aged person can have a mentor, and presumably many of the same concepts would apply. However, a discussion of mentoring for young people is particularly salient because this is the point in life when decisions about the future are being made (or not made, or made inappropriately). This also is a time when negative influences, such as drug abuse, participation in street gangs and dropping out of school, can become a problem for many youth. Although mentoring happens naturally for many young people, programs of planned mentoring are being tried in many places. This paper focuses especially on such programs.

Chapter I presents an overview of mentoring — what it means, who experiences it, what are its potential benefits. Chapter II examines where mentoring is occurring for young people, with a focus toward programs affiliated with college campuses. And Chapter III reviews the context of mentoring, with suggestions for policy makers who may be considering mentoring as part of their agendas.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

The Appeal of Mentoring

Mentoring can mean many things. Asking 100 people would elicit 100 responses, each slightly different. However, two elements no doubt would stand out. The first would be a reference to individual people, one person interacting in some way with another person. And the second would involve some sort of supportive action — i.e., guidance, support, advice, counseling.

The appeal of mentoring is that it brings individuals together on a one-to-one basis, bypassing bureaucracy and institutions per se. It brings people together essentially because it makes sense to have real people talking to real people. It also makes sense that an older or more experienced person will have skills or knowledge from which a younger person might benefit; hence, mentoring implies someone older (or somehow more experienced) working with someone younger (and, virtually by definition, less experienced).

Beyond the general parameters of an older/experienced person working with someone younger, what happens during mentoring is potentially unlimited. This is part of the appeal of mentoring: it is oriented toward the needs of individual people. A blueprint for effective mentoring would not be feasible.

Although mentoring responds to needs of the individual, these needs are, in fact, determined by what would help this individual live satisfactorily in society. For a younger person, the skills and knowledge of a more experienced person can be very important in enabling that young person to progress along any of a number of paths. These paths might range from finishing high school, to improving math skills, to learning decision-making strategies, to finding a job, to coping with a drug problem, to finding child care. Good mentoring helps the individual personally and also helps open doors to the larger society.

Characteristics of a Mentoring Relationship

Relationships between young people and older/experienced people happen all the time. Teachers work with students; employers supervise and train younger workers. Yet, mentoring is more than just encounters, and more than one person telling another how to function in a particular setting. Mentoring means getting to know another individual (beyond superficial conversations) and then acting to support that individual. Getting to know the younger person is critical because mentoring is premised on helping the individual with his or her unique situation and needs.

A mentor can act in many capacities for a young person, but the major focus is to "use their expertise and practical wisdom to provide enrichment, inspire dreams and the pursuit

of realistic goals."[1] In the relationship of a mentor to a young person, there may be elements of tutoring, counseling, role modeling, etc., but these functions alone would be too narrow to encompass the meaning of mentoring. The term "role model," for example, is different from mentoring:

> A role model is defined as one whose life and experiences provide a concrete image of who a younger person can become. By contrast, a mentor is someone who lends guidance and support to enable the young person to become whoever they choose to be. If the role model's message is "Be like me," the mentor's implicit message says: "I will help you be whoever you want to be" (The Forgotten Half, p. 169).

A mentor, therefore, might help to guide or direct a young person toward thoughtful decision making; help the youth to practice new skills; provide positive reinforcement; listen to concerns of the young person, among many possibilities — depending on the interests and needs of the youth.

Does Mentoring Need To Be Encouraged?

Mentoring has occurred since the beginning of the human experience. Parents have always mentored their children. Socrates mentored Plato. Today, business partners occasionally mentor younger associates; teachers sometimes take a special interest in one of their students. Mentoring seems to be a natural part of living. The concern in American society today, however, is that many children and youth are not getting enough mentoring. When viewed through the lens of the "good old days," changes in economics, family structure, housing and other areas have created situations where there is less time and less opportunity for the natural development of close ties between young people and older or more experienced people.

Across the economic spectrum more parents of young people are in the work force, leaving less time to spend with their children. The proximity to relatives or an extended family does not exist for many persons because of the mobility of families and job-relocation requirements. Neighborhoods are less cohesive and supportive. Many people don't know their neighbors. And some neighborhoods are a "bad influence" on youth, such as those with heavy drug activity.

Schools also have become larger and less personal. The "one-room schoolhouse" where teachers knew each child (and all family members) no longer exists. High schools may have several thousand students, and each teacher may see 150 or more students every day.

Because the benefits of a positive mentoring relationship can be impressive, a number of attempts are being tried at "planned" mentoring — bringing together youth and mentors through various types of structured programs.

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[1]Gray, William A. "Advice on Planning Mentoring Programs for At-Risk Youth," Mentoring International, vol. 3, no. 3 (Summer 1989).

Mentoring in Context

It might be helpful to think of mentoring as a bridge. There generally are two classes: (1) bridges that connect an individual to society or institutions in society, and (2) bridges that connect an individual to him or herself. According to a study of mentoring programs by Erwin Flaxman, Carol Ascher and Charles Harrington[2], this first type is "instrumental mentoring" and the second is "psychosocial mentoring." An example of instrumental mentoring might be helping a young person connect (build a bridge) to a job, i.e., assisting the young person to reach out into society to acquire something tangible — employment, education, health care.

In psychosocial mentoring, the mentor might give verbal advice and encouragement to a young person who is making a decision about whether or not to enroll in college. Part of this process involves envisioning the possibilities; the mentor could take the young person to a college campus to talk with enrolled students. This second type of bridge bolsters the self-confidence and self-esteem of the young person and enhances his or her abilities to make positive decisions.

The connection to society is evident with instrumental mentoring. With psychosocial mentoring, there is also a connection to the larger social context. The Flaxman study noted that "youths' self-concepts, for example, are formed from the social life in their community, school and home, and the outcomes of either planned or natural mentoring will be affected by these natural relationships and environments."

The question arises: Why does this young person need the mentor? Couldn't he or she find a job or make the decision about college? Of course, many young people do this, because they already know where to look for a job, or whether some college potentially will accept them. But for young people with limited experiences — including many referred to as "at risk" — connections to society are harder to make. There may be options they don't know about or assume are beyond their reach (such as college).

Mentoring is, on first glance, a one-to-one relationship between two people. But to be useful, the bridges and potential bridges to the larger society should be evident and accessible. The mentor can sometimes "build" these bridges because he or she is knowledgeable about, or connected to, societal supports. As an example, mentors may know of job possibilities with their own business associates. To help ensure this accessibility, however, mentoring could be a part of a broader effort. For example, a job training program with coursework as its major component might also find mentors for its students. These mentors could encourage the participants to finish the program, or help them solve personal problems which could potentially hamper their successful entry into the job market.

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[2]Flaxman, Erwin, Carol Ascher and Charles Harrington. Mentoring Programs and Practices: An Analysis of the Literature (New York: Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, September 1988).

Mentoring Is Not Cost-Free

From a quick definition of mentoring, it might be inferred that just a little time and less money could get a mentoring program under way. The mentor, as well as the young person, volunteers his or her time (in most cases). The only specified activity is that the pair talks to each other — and most people are already verbal communicators. But more is needed — resources of money, time, energy, commitment — to support quality programs.

Mentoring is not just a few casual conversations. Effort is required to bring two suitable participants together — just to start the conversation. For example, recruiting might be needed to attract mentors; followed by screening to ensure some level of acceptability in terms of skills, ethics, or whatever. Even though a mentor is deemed suitable, he or she needs training to acquire relevant skills for working with young people.

Another issue requiring time and energy is finding the best possible match between individual mentors and young people. Not every mentor can do everything; some have expertise in one area such as employment counseling, while others might know more about drug referral programs. Some may know how to navigate the welfare system, while others may be able to facilitate college application procedures. Equally important are the life experiences that the mentor brings. A mentor who has experienced problems similar to that of the young person may be more understanding or supportive than someone whose life has been completely different. Therefore, there should be a match between what a young person needs and what a mentor can offer. In reality, this is often hard to accomplish, especially if there is a shortage of mentors in the community.

Because human behavior is hard to predict, mentoring relationships may not always "take." The processes of choosing and matching mentors and young people, and training mentors, deserve careful attention and resources. And resources are needed to monitor and evaluate the progress of a relationship and to make changes if either party is experiencing difficulty.

There is also a more subtle kind of cost. It involves the commitment from both parties to put energy, time and effort into making the mentoring experience a success. Whether or not the relationship "takes" depends not only on administrative matching, training and monitoring, but also on the willingness of the involved individuals to invest in a sincere relationship. It is the human commitment that may ultimately determine the effectiveness of a mentoring situation.

Long-Term Goals of Mentoring

Mentoring relationships, except in a very few cases, probably will not last forever. In fact, structured mentoring arrangements often have time constraints: a year, a semester. But a successful mentoring relationship should afford longer benefits for the young person by providing ideas, models, knowledge that will be useful in the future. Young people need to learn how to build their own bridges, including where to find assistance when they need to build these bridges. Building bridges for them has immediate impact, but equally important is empowerment to set and achieve their own goals. Mentoring, like schooling, should be part of the entire youth experience that leads toward creative adulthood. "During

mentoring," according to Flaxman "the mentees [the young persons being mentored] identify with their mentor, and, as a result, become able to do for themselves what these older persons have done for them."

Mentors, too, gain from mentoring relationships. They learn the satisfaction to be derived from helping others. These experiences help mentors to acquire an ethos of "community service" — i.e., contributing to the people in the community. Because of this community service function, at least in part, college campuses have begun encouraging their students to become mentors. The intent of community service programs is to influence people toward a longer-term interest in improving their community.

WHERE MENTORING TAKES PLACE

Planned programs of mentoring are being carried out in a variety of settings. The concept has definitely taken hold. The following are some of the more well-known efforts of mentoring activities for youth who are in high school, junior high or middle school, or who fit into that general age range.

School/College/Community Partnerships

A number of campuses are developing programs that link their own college students in a mentoring relationship with young people in nearby high schools or middle schools. Those selected to be mentored are often at risk of dropping out of high school or somehow not making a productive transition to adulthood. The campus is the locus of administration for these projects. In many instances, additional funding for the programs is received from outside community and/or business sources. Community people, in addition to college students, may also become involved as mentors.

Campus Partners in Learning (CPIL) is a major activity of Campus Compact, ECS' public and community service project. Through CPIL, a number of postsecondary institutions are being helped to start mentoring projects on their campuses. The goals of CPIL include supporting college students as mentors of at-risk youth and supporting the higher education institutions in creating meaningful opportunities for student involvement in community service. Several foundations provided seed grants for the initial 10 programs.

The following is a description of two CPIL programs:

- Boston University pairs college student mentors and young people to work together on community service projects. In addition, the pairs spend two hours per month together informally. The project has received outside grants and an outside agency has developed a mentor-training program.

- The University of West Florida (in Pensacola) is planning a credit course for mentoring; mentors will be recruited, trained and supported while working with students at two middle schools. Outside funding is being sought for the project.

Bronx Community College established on its campus an alternative school for young people ages 14-17. College students in a child-study class were invited to join a mentoring program for students at this school; a minimum of two contact hours per week for the semester was required. In addition to meeting on a one-to-one basis, the entire group of mentors and young students engage in social activities.

City University of New York received $575,000 from the state to provide college student mentors on 15 campuses for students in the city's public schools. The main purpose of the program is to reduce the high school dropout rate. The college student mentor serves as a big brother or sister, friend and role model and helps the student negotiate the education system by visiting high school classes of the young person or by bringing him or her to the college campus.

Career Beginnings is a business-college initiative in 24 cities. One of its four major components is mentoring, in which business and professional leaders help teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds develop career goals and educational opportunities. In addition to providing training and support to help mentors become effective advocates for youth, Career Beginnings develops ongoing college courses on topics such as employment, life skills and career planning and provides an enriched summer program which includes employment (no fast food places or crew work) and support.

The program is year-round and has a major goal of encouraging students to enroll in postsecondary education — either college or vocational/career training. Career Beginnings' main office is at Brandeis University with funding provided by several groups, including the Commonwealth Fund, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Gannett Foundation and other local community and corporate foundations.

Linking Up, Cornell University's mentoring program, provides opportunities for adults and youths to engage in mutually rewarding relationships, with goals of promoting self-esteem and personal growth. Adult volunteer mentors are recruited, and 7th- and 8th-grade students in two nearby communities participate. The mentor and student meet regularly on a one-to-one basis and participate in some group activities. Training is provided to the mentors by the university.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) is a comprehensive direct services academic enhancement program for 14- and 15-year-old Texans identified as potential school dropouts. Each summer, at 16 higher education institutions throughout the state more than 100 young people live in college dormitories and receive tutoring, personal counseling and work experience. College students serve as dorm counselors. YOU is coordinated by the state and uses the resources of federal, state, local and public and private agencies.

"I Have a Dream" Foundation is built on the original program of New York philanthropist Eugene Lang, who promised to provide a college education to all 61 members of a Harlem 6th-grade class. Other sponsors wanting to create "dream" programs must adopt a 5th- or 6th-grade class and provide financial and organizational support through high school and beyond, if possible. In most cases, programs are conducted by a local college or university and headquartered in a community-based organization.

There are eight components of the dream program, one of which is a mentoring relationship between each young person and someone who can provide attention and concern, along with power and resources. "These are the usual attributes of middle-class parents who know which levers to push and when to push them to make the resource of the school system respond to the individual needs of a child," according to foundation officials.

Other components include parental involvement and group activities of all the youth involved in a particular program. As of 1986, there were 1,100 "dreamers" in New York City; and several other sites around the country.

School/Community Partnerships

Schools and school districts often form links to the community. One common example is that of adopt-a-school programs, where a business supports a particular school with donations or staff time and expertise. Mentoring relationships also can be established between a student and some individual in the community.

Montbello High School in Denver, Colorado, works with a group of mentors from major corporations and the governor's job training office. Students are encouraged to learn from their mentors' experiences.

The National School Volunteer Program, Inc. is a national nonprofit education association which provides leadership for school volunteers throughout the country. Although the school volunteer program does not focus specifically on mentoring, its activities incorporate mentoring concepts. For example, volunteers tutor individual students, give one-to-one attention to gifted students and work to improve student attendance.

Within-School Mentoring

Students tutoring other students is one kind of mentoring within schools. An older and/or more experienced student may work with a student who is having difficulty in some academic area(s). There are benefits to both parties which make the practice worthwhile.

Usually student tutoring is carried out in a one-to-one situation, or one tutor may work with two or three other students. The benefits to the child being tutored include tailoring of the lesson to his or her needs and a chance to relate to someone other than an adult — possibly creating a less pressured situation and a chance to identify with a peer.[3] As many benefits are reported for the student who does the tutoring as the one who is tutored. Often, students who are themselves behind academically are chosen as tutors. This not only enhances their self-esteem for having been chosen, but also allows them to review basics without feeling inadequate or below grade level.

Student tutoring has potential pitfalls; not all students can be good tutors, and it is important to train tutors in human interaction skills. But a carefully planned tutoring program can have benefits: "Tutoring builds bridges across grades, teaching older students an alternative to teasing, bullying and corrupting the young. . . . And it creates a sphere where low achievers can succeed," according to the *Harvard Education Letter*.

Teachers as mentors Many teachers serve as mentors at schools across the country. A teacher may take a special interest in a student, guiding him or her into specific courses and helping the young person get into a college, for example. These types of relationships usually develop naturally, they occur irregularly. Teachers in schools as they are typically structured today do not have the time to mentor every student.

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[3]Webb, Michael. "Peer Helping Relationships in Urban Schools." ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, no. 37 (December 1987).

The current movement toward restructuring schools tries to arrange the school experience in ways to give teachers more personal contact with individual students. For example, one of the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools recommends that high school teachers have direct teaching responsibility for no more than 80 students (compared to more than 150 in many U.S. high schools today). This attention to personalization could give teachers a chance to mentor students and get to know them as individual people, rather than having only the superficial contact that traditional school structure allows between students and teachers.

State-Initiated Mentoring

A few states have legislation or state-sponsored efforts to encourage mentoring or activities similar to mentoring.

California passed "Human Corps" legislation in 1987 in which 400,000 undergraduate and graduate students at the state's 27 universities are "strongly encouraged and expected, but not required" to give 30 hours of community service each year. Activities related to this legislation include tutoring for younger students in the public schools — an activity very much related to mentoring.

Minnesota passed legislation in May 1989 which Governor Rudy Perpich called "the most comprehensive package of youth service legislation in the nation." The package provides support for school-based youth service and earmarks $150,000 in matching funds for 20 colleges to create community service projects emphasizing tutoring and mentoring of younger students.

New York has several programs with mentoring components. Among them is the Liberty Scholarship program, created in 1988, to provide students from low-income families money to attend college. The program also offers counseling and support services to guide at-risk students through high school graduation. A related effort is the Liberty Partnerships program with $10 million in funding in 1989, its first year. This program gives competitive grants to higher education and community-based organizations to provide mentoring and counseling services for dropout prevention in elementary and high schools. Almost 90,000 students are expected to participate by 1994.

The New York State Mentoring Committee (administered by the Governor's School and Business Alliance) launched a mentoring campaign in January 1989 to promote mentoring as a way to motivate young people at risk of dropping out of high school. The campaign will publicize the committee's existence and goals and strengthen existing efforts — including the development of an in-state database for public use.

Private or Nonprofit Support for Mentoring

Nonschool-based organizations often include mentoring as part of their activities and work closely with schools.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters has 470 affiliated agencies, located in nearly every state. The goal is to match volunteer adults with children (mainly from single-parent families). Mentors known as Big Brothers and Big Sisters provide guidance and friendship and act as mentors and role models. The national office receives contributions from corporations and foundations.

Public/Private Ventures, a not-for-profit corporation, has funded a four-year Summer Training and Education Program (STEP) as a demonstration project. Programs in five cities work with 14- and 15-year-olds who are not doing well academically. These youths enroll in STEP for 15 months. The program includes two summers of 90 hours of basic skills instruction and study of "life skills" and 80 hours of work experience. During the intervening school year, support activities are provided, including twice-monthly contact between the youth and a counselor/advocate. The counselor encourages the youth and may link him or her with other social services or monitor school performance.

WHERE MENTORING FITS: CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

To Mentor or Not To Mentor?

"Mentoring is not a panacea for all societal ills. It is a human relationship that encourages and guides personal growth and development in an individual. It is not an alternative to social welfare programs," writes Margaret Mahoney in her 1983 report to the Commonwealth Fund. Furthermore, as William Gray notes in *Mentoring: Aid to Excellence in Education, the Family and the Community*,[4] "Since planned mentoring programs for at-risk youth have been developed only recently, there is not much research evidence available as to what works and why, and what doesn't and why not." However, anecdotal accounts tell of many people whose lives were permanently influenced by caring mentors, and mentoring's current popularity indicates that the human connection is missing for a large number of young people growing up today. [Current research efforts are underway to document the effects of mentoring. One of the most promising studies is being undertaken by Stephen Hamilton and Nancy Darling at Cornell University. In addition to examining mentoring in this country, it will also provide a comparative analysis of mentoring efforts in other countries.]

Policy makers looking at mentoring programs should remember, however, that mentoring is not cost-free. The most basic part of mentoring — bringing together a young person and an older/experienced person — takes resources and coordination. Mentors must be found, through advertising or networking; mentors need training in effective communication; mentors and young people must be matched appropriately based on selected criteria; mentors need support through ongoing contact with other mentors and with program administrators.

Beyond the mentoring experience itself, mentors may find that some young people need more assistance — job training, drug rehabilitation, housing. Mentoring by itself may enhance self-esteem and decision making, and that in itself can permanently influence young people. But additional resources must exist for those who need them.

The Nature of Existing Mentoring Programs

As the descriptions of structured mentoring programs in the second chapter indicate, the mentoring movement in the 1980s was a grassroots movement. Programs are diverse, often loosely defined, geographically dispersed, housed in a variety of different organizations and institutions. They attract, and depend on, volunteers, (or "near-volunteers" such as college students earning credit for acting as mentors). All these qualities are in many ways

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[4]Gray, William A. and Marilynne Miles Gray. "Mentoring: Aid to Excellence in Education, the Family and the Community." Proceedings of the First International Conference on Mentoring, vol. I. (Vancouver, B.C., Canada: International Association for Mentoring, 1986).

desirable, perhaps even essential, given that mentoring seeks to make strong human connections in what can seem to young people like an increasingly impersonal world.

But the grassroots nature of the movement also produces some disadvantages. Many mentoring efforts are not at the core of the organizations in which they are housed; often they are tangential to the main business of the organization. The idea that a young person's success may hinge on another person's sustained, informed interest in him or her is often an afterthought — something that's nice if there happens to be a mentor available, but not a critical feature in an intervention program. Likewise, funds for mentoring often come from outside rather than mainstream sources. Funding generally is not supplied by the central administration of a university or by the legislature, for example, but by foundations or corporations — groups better suited to initiating experiments than to changing organizational priorities.

What Are the Implications for State Policy Makers?

If states have an interest in the success of young people, especially those who may be at risk of school failure, and if mentoring can improve young people's chances for success, then states would seem to have a clear interest in seeing that mentoring thrives. States might consider two avenues to supporting mentoring. At the most general level, state policy makers might think in terms of maximizing the advantages of current mentoring arrangements and minimizing disadvantages. Keeping some mentoring efforts voluntary and independent makes sense. It allows future efforts to build on current ones. It is an approach that correlates well with the inherent nature of mentoring, which demands that the needs of individuals be met in ways that are individually appropriate rather than centrally determined.

On the other hand, if the mentoring effort is worthwhile, it also makes sense for states to bring some portion of it into the mainstream — to make it an intrinsic component of larger systems rather than an occasional afterthought. This implies that the state should put more resources, of several varieties, into mentoring. If a state decides to promote mentoring, the major question for policy makers is how and where to put additional resources.

How Can States Encourage Mentoring?

There are two general approaches policy makers can use to foster mentoring: encouraging the proliferation of existing programs and helping to move certain existing or new programs into the mainstream of administrative and funding activities. Existing programs can be encouraged through several means:

- Providing leadership. Governors, legislators and other state leaders bear the right and responsibility to shape public discourse. A governor like Rudy Perpich of Minnesota, who has called for "one million mentors," puts strengthening the human connection squarely on the public agenda. Governors, in particular, can demonstrate their conviction that mentoring is important through actions such as issuing an executive order that allows state employees to set aside time to volunteer as mentors. Public agencies could follow the example of AT&T, which, under terms of a recently

established union contract, is piloting a program that allows an amount of accrued leave to be used for time in schools.

- Creating the conditions. Although mandating programs may be inappropriate, states can create conditions that make mentoring increasingly important in institutional life. In California, for example, students at state universities are strongly encouraged and expected to spend a set number of hours each year in community service. Mentoring is one activity students can undertake to meet this expectation. The same expectation could be extended to a host of other institutions supported in large part by state funding. Untried so far, but perhaps promising, is the notion of states offering incentives — possibly in the form of tax relief — to private companies that actively engage themselves and their employees in mentoring.

- Directing the flow of information and volunteers. If mentoring were mapped against the background of the social and civic life of the nation, it would show up in clusters. There would be school-college clusters, school-community clusters, government-business-job training clusters, clusters of volunteer groups such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, 4-H Clubs and Boys' and Girls' Clubs, among others.

  But the connections between clusters would be, for the most part, weak or nonexistent. And lack of connections means missed opportunities. It means, for example, that a Private Industry Council that works with a job-training program set up under the terms of the Job Training Partnership Act is unlikely to draw on the college students who have been encouraged to involve themselves in community service. It also means that new people attracted to mentoring by state leaders' strong support for the idea have no simple way to find out where their time and talent could be put to good use.

  To add or strengthen links, states could set up centers that centralize information about mentoring projects and link prospective mentors with those who need them. This activity could be incorporated into already existing clearinghouses, allowing the information to be centralized while the efforts remain independent.

Another suggested alternative for policy makers is to position existing or newly created programs more in the mainstream of both administrative and financial arrangements. While providing leadership, creating a positive climate and aiding information referral are all critical, policy makers should pay special attention to ways to incorporate mentoring into the larger context of education, job training and other social programs.

- Move existing programs to the core of the institution. Making existing programs less peripheral could help to incorporate the value of mentoring and human connection into the way business is undertaken in the institution. The Campus Partners in Learning (CPIL) programs mentioned in Chapter II provide examples.

  Using course credit (or other incentives) means that more resources are being channeled into mentoring programs. For example, a college course in mentoring typically begins with training for the college student and those supporting the effort (such as the student's professor) to help the student find programs the youth needs, such as drug counseling or child care.

Making mentoring less peripheral presumably makes it accessible to a larger number of young people — because mentoring receives more attention and more resources to support its activities.

- Create new mentoring efforts within the context of institutional change. If policy makers are considering new mentoring programs, the most useful might be those that are part of a larger effort, such as school restructuring. Restructuring means change that encompasses the whole school and possibly the entire education system. Restructuring might change traditional ways of dividing knowledge into subject areas or reconfigure the time blocks that a typical school day is divided into. A restructured school system focuses on ways of making learning more personalized, where students really get to know themselves, their peers and their teachers.

  Mentoring, which has at its core the human connection, might easily be part of a restructured school. Community people or college students could be encouraged or rewarded to come into the school and work with younger students on a one-to-one basis. This would be mutually reinforcing with the restructured environment of the larger school setting.

Points To Ponder for Policy Makers

The policy-making goal, as suggested in this paper, is to enhance current efforts and judiciously initiate new ones. But how can existing programs avoid being undercut by new state-funded mentoring, and how can quality be assured in new (and existing) programs?

- Assessing the needs. There are many places where current programs, perhaps Big Brothers/Big Sisters, serve a large number of young people. Even if one of these areas should need more mentoring slots or need a different type of mentoring (one attached to a college, for example), implementing a new program could take young people away from Big Brothers. Any decision to expand or start new mentoring efforts should be predicated on the needs of the area being served. Is another program needed or should expansion of Big Brothers (as in this example) be effected?

  Furthermore, any increase in services should be tied to outreach where young people can be informed of, and recruited to join, a mentor project. However, gathering lists of names of young people to be mentored is not enough; matching young people with the right mentor project is critical. Much of this groundwork in both assessing needs and finding and matching young people to programs could be directed through the state clearinghouse activity suggested above.

- Quality and efficiency through training. Finding young people and mentors is an important component, but not the only one. A database full of names is a start, but ways to ensure quality are crucial. Quality is probably best reflected in the expertise of those who provide the service — i.e., the mentors. One way to encourage high quality is through training programs for new, or veteran, mentors. This might start with defining the components of a training program; beyond this, implementing the training might revolve around setting up a program to carry out training. Perhaps a core group of people in the state could provide training services to new or existing

mentoring efforts. This would allow, potentially, several mentors from several mentoring efforts to be trained at the same time — thus, increasing the efficiency of utilizing resources which the state may have allocated for mentoring.

- Innovative evaluation Anytime state policy makers put money into a program, they need to know if the expenditure is really helping the situation. But mentoring, because of its intensely personal nature, may be somewhat difficult to assess, especially in traditional ways. Perhaps evaluations should be carried out in personal ways — using anecdotes and narratives gained in interviews with mentors and their young "charges." Furthermore, it might require several years before a mentoring effort has evolved into a successful and smooth enterprise. Therefore, an "evaluation" might not be possible in the first year or two. To avoid the possibility of judging a program too quickly, it would probably be useful to fund a program for three to five years to allow full implementation before "passing judgment."

Encouraging the proliferation of current mentoring efforts through leadership and the sharing of information, as well as integrating existing or new programs into a larger context, should mean more quality mentoring is offered to more young people. If state policy makers take the interest in mentoring that its potential merits, the benefits will accrue not only to the young people who are aided and to the mentors who reap the satisfactions of knowing they have made a significant difference in another person's life but also to society generally. Too often, the young person who "slips between the cracks" of the system concludes that nobody cares. When there are more opportunities for more young people to conclude that somebody does indeed care, the net benefit is to the community; the strength of the community is enhanced.

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